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BEGINNINGS

IN *The*

PHILIPPINE

ISLANDS

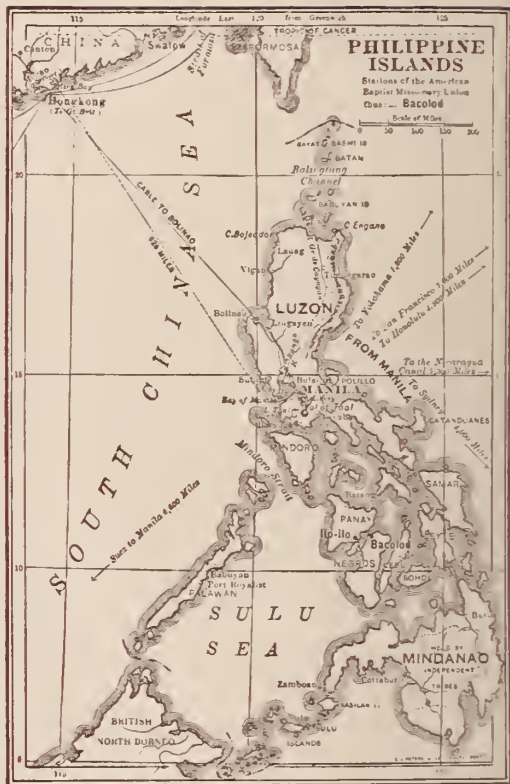
John F. Goucher

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Philippine Islands



Discovery and Extent.



THE Philippine Islands were discovered in 1521 by the great explorer of the Middle Ages, Magellan, and named after his master, Philip II., King of Spain. They extend from about 4° to 20° north latitude and from about 116° to 126° east longitude, and form a part of the great Malaysian Archipelago to the southeast of China and Siam. The total area of the Philippines is 140,000 square miles, or about the same as the Japanese Empire. The islands number more than one thousand, but of these only about a dozen are of a size sufficient to maintain any considerable population. Luzon is the largest, having an area of 44,400 square miles, and holds more than one-half of the whole population of the group.

Climate and Productions.

As the islands extend over so many degrees of latitude, the climate varies somewhat, the north point of Luzon being as far removed from the southern island of the Sulu group as is the north of England from the south of Italy. Being all contained in the tropics, however, it does not differ materially and most of the time it is intensely hot.

The natural resources of the Philippines are immense, with mines of coal and iron, as well as other minerals, and an abundance of all the products of the tropics. Cotton, sugar, rice, hemp, coffee and tobacco, and the dense forests of valuable woods, are the chief wealth of the islands.

The Capital.

Manila, the capital of the whole group, is situated on the main island of Luzon, and has a population of more than 200,000 inhabitants. It is one of the best known and most frequented harbors of the eastern seas, and being a large manufacturing place, has an extensive and increasing trade with the leading commercial countries of the world. The city has a Roman Catholic cathedral built as long ago as

1654, noted for its peal of fourteen bells, which get little rest.

The People.

The population of the Philippines is variously estimated at from seven to ten millions, although no accurate census has ever been taken. The native people are of the Malay tribe, copper colored, a little indolent, easy-going but not lazy. They work chiefly on sugar plantations and earn only from \$5.00 to \$10.00 a month, some indeed not reaching the former sum. There are, however, many different peoples in the islands.

First, the lordly class,—the land owners and head men of the districts. The majority of these are Mestizsos, i. e., a mixture of Spanish and Asiatic. This class is more or less well educated, speaks Spanish and owns all the personal property and real estate in the islands except that held by the Catholic Church.

Second, the laboring class, who are practically slaves of the land owners and who are divided into various tribes, the most important of which are those known as the Tagalos, numbering some 3,000,000 and occupying the islands of Luzon and Mindoro, and the Visayans, estimated at

2,500,000, occupying the central or Visayan group. This latter tribe is the one among which our Baptist missionaries have begun their work.

Third. In the cities are numbers of Chinese, and in the mountains and remote forest lands wild tribes are found, who are uncivilized heathen.

Education.

Education in the Philippine Islands is decidedly in advance of education in



REV. ERIC LUND

Spain. In the latter country only seventeen per cent of the people can read and write; in the former only seventeen per cent cannot. Filipinos who have studied abroad have taken high rank. The chief hindrance to the

advancement of the people has been the all powerful influence of a corrupt priesthood.

Present Conditions — Religious and Social.

No sooner had the islands been discovered by Magellan and handed over to Spain, than the friars — members of monastic brotherhoods of the Roman Catholic Church — flocked thither and began baptizing the natives with great zeal, and becoming from the first the virtual rulers of the new colonies. “All the king’s subjects shall be Catholics” was the tyrannical dictum of the King of Spain, and no territory was considered entirely conquered until its inhabitants had been baptized. Of the whole population, in round numbers, about two-thirds are Roman Catholics, the remainder being perhaps equally divided between Moham-medans and pagans. The Roman Catholics are all more or less civilized, as is also a considerable portion of the non-Christian population.

Of the Roman Catholics at large it may be said that, with few exceptions, a bitter hostility prevails between them and the Spanish priests, and especially the friars; for, while some of the latter are reputed to be good men, as a class they bear a most unsavory reputation. They have oppressed and wronged the

people for centuries, and knowing but too well what was in store for them when Spain gave up the islands, no less than eight hundred of them immediately sailed for other lands. Some difficult and delicate questions will demand settlement concerning the immense wealth which these religious orders have amassed, but for the present we may regard their influence upon the people as greatly diminished.

The mass of the people, however, while opposed to their priests, must still be regarded as Roman Catholics. Their religion is, to a great extent, a mere superstition. Their religious teachers have long been noted for their amazing ignorance, and as might be expected, the mass of the people have not been able to take a position in advance of their leaders. So while the larger part of the Filipinos are counted as Christians, and a good many are devout Roman Catholics, the condition of the multitudes outside of a few cities is little above paganism.

The war is practically over ; the islands are ours, and though a few of the people refuse to lay down their arms, still carrying on a sort of " guerilla warfare," most

of them have given their allegiance to the United States and are beginning to reap the benefits of a more liberal government. Socially, the conditions are much the same as before the war. With the departure of the friars the people have been relieved of a great burden. They are reacting strongly from Roman Catholicism, and are more and more open to the gospel.

Beginning of Christian Work.

Immediately after the occupation of the islands by the United States forces, the British and Foreign Bible Society sent an agent to Manila. In spite of much opposition from the priests he secured a place for a depository. His first day's sales were twenty Spanish Bibles, seventeen Testaments, forty-eight separate gospels, one English Bible and one Testament. After time enough to learn the temper of the people, he writes : " Make known to the missionary world that the harvest is ripe and the laborers are few. Who will be in haste to enter this newly opened door ? "

The Presbyterians, Methodists and others have already answered this call and are hard at work in this new and promising field.

Opening of Baptist Work.

The circumstance which led to the opening of our Baptist mission in the islands was a most interesting providence.

Rev. Eric Lund had been the honored and esteemed missionary of the Union for more than twenty years in Spain, and his knowledge of the Spanish language and his devotion and experience seemed to indicate that he was the man chosen of God to begin that work.

In the meanwhile, Braulio Manikan, a young Visayan, educated in the Philippine schools, had gone to Spain for further study, and had become an infidel. He was designed for the priesthood and was ambitious to become a friar, but was thoroughly disgusted with the Romish Church. He was led to visit our mission at Barcelona, conducted by Mr. Lund, and under this ministry he was converted and baptized. Just as the question of opening a mission in the Philippine Islands was being considered by the Missionary Union, a desire was born in his heart to return and carry the gospel to his countrymen.

It was with great joy, therefore, that these two, at the invitation of the Execu-

tive Committee, sailed March 24, 1900, from Barcelona, Spain, to Iloilo on the island of Panay, to open the American Baptist Mission in the Philippines. They had already translated and printed copies of the gospels and some tracts which they carried with them.

The following letter from Mr. Mauikan was received by the Committee, which exhibits his fervent and steadfast Christian spirit :

" I have received your brotherly salutation and Christian love through Mr. Lund, for which I thank you very much. It seems to me no one more than I ought to praise God for what he has done for me. I see clearly his mercy and infinite goodness, and I will always sing praises to Jehovah, my God. I hope to be able to correspond to your remarkable favors, as I desire to work with decision and enthusiasm to evangelize my countrymen. I hope they will not refuse the Lord's calling, but accept Christ Jesus as the only Savior given to the world.

" The enterprise will be arduous, because our countrymen have for so long a time been deprived of the light through the errors of Catholicism, but the Christian can do everything through Christ, who comforts him, and those who are in Christ's hands need not fear. Besides, I am sure that you will help me with your prayers, which will greatly encourage me. I love my countrymen very much, therefore I wish they had the riches that I have

" Though I have not the honor of knowing any one of your board, I send them my Christian love, and bidding you farewell I place myself at your disposal in the Philippines, where I hope to be shortly."

Manikan entered upon the work with great earnestness, and has been very successful in reaching the people with the gospel. He is a hymn writer and translator and Mr. Briggs says of him: "A few such men as he on each of these important islands, with a spiritual teacher and guide like Mr. Lund back of them, would soon turn these islands upside down."

Mr. Lund was joined, near the close of the year, by Rev. Charles W. Briggs. The reception given these workers has more than ful-



REV. C. W. BRIGGS

filled the expectation with which the work was entered upon. The situation is one of promise almost unparalleled in the history of Christian missions. The people of the islands are more than open-minded toward Protestantism. They seem ready *en masse* to embrace it. The chief danger is that of merely superficial pro-

fession. Romanism has had its day in the islands. It has shamefully misused the opportunity enjoyed for centuries, and but little attachment remains for that religion among the people.

"Here," writes Mr. Briggs, "are millions of people, many of them as bright and shrewd and full of promise as can be found in America, the official estimate ranging from eight to twelve millions. They are clamoring to hear the gospel. They have never heard it, but they have heard of it. If I could preach in either Spanish or Visayan I should have larger audiences than throng any church in America. Calls come in from surrounding towns for the 'padre protestante' to come and preach to them. Believe me, there has not been a greater call for Christian workers, nor a more urgent call, nor one that promises a greater Pentecost than the call of the Philippine Islands to America to-day."

Iloilo, on the island of Panay, was the place first selected for the headquarters of the mission. This was occupied for nearly a year, when the missionaries removed to Jaro, a town three miles north of Iloilo, and thought to be a more favorable location, as a very important centre of trade, containing the greatest market-place in all the Visayan Islands. Mr. Lund's work aroused intense interest. Often after a service in an outlying village the simple country folk would follow him three hot miles, back to Iloilo, going to his house for a second service. This work was pros-

ecuted amid much discomfort. The climate is intensely hot, and the house in which he lived devoid of comforts. Nevertheless, in a little more than one year he succeeded in laying a strong foundation. He writes :

“Tracts have been scattered by the thousand, the periodical has been started and is carrying the truth to a number of towns in this and other islands, a few native converts are already teaching and propagating the gospel; the whole Testament is translated, the grammar is half finished; doctrinal tracts are being written. My helper in the work of translation was barbarously murdered four months ago by the Filipino boxers. This has been a great loss as he had become very intelligent in the doctrines of the New Testament.”

Again he writes of the common people:

“I wrote you recently of the despised ‘pulahán’ whom we found in the Jaro market. These are the people who fill our Jaro chapel. On Sunday they continue coming to Iloilo where we as yet have our home. From sixty to eighty men and women used to stay with us over Sunday nights sleeping as they could on bare floors. Manikan has the names of more than two hundred who come more or less regularly to the meeting. On certain days our new Jaro chapel is too small, though we have place for two hundred people in it. There are some twenty candidates for baptism among those who are receiving instruction on the subject. In order to test them and teach them more fully the ways of the new life, we have organized them into a sort of Endeavor Society to evangelize their own *barrios*, where we, on account of the war, cannot go ourselves. At present they have started four Sunday schools in as many *barrios*.

“They are far from being such ‘beasts’ as the educated Filipinos consider them to be. On New Year’s morning, for instance, those simple ‘pulahans’ surprised us with an artistic and superb decoration of the chapel with splendid tropical plants, twisted palm leaves, some wrought into flying birds, and luxurious flowers. An elderly American lady, who was present, said with tears of joy in her eyes that she never was so impressed by any religious meeting in the States as by the meeting that morning in Jaro. A few of these ‘pulahans’ are, no doubt, really converted. They have given up their idols, they pray in our meetings, they speak to others of their new faith, and they suffer persecution. To avoid being murdered by a sort of Filipino ‘boxers,’ one of them has not been to his home for a long time. Peace is being established in the province now, and we may have baptized a few of them before you hear from us again.

“That they are in earnest up country is proved by the fact that they have already buried two of their people without the priest, and brought us babes to pray for instead of taking them to the priest to be christened. This week we rented a house in Jaro, so we no longer live in Iloilo. We are in the strategic point of our field, live in a better and less expensive house and have a large place built of masonry, for the long expected printing press.”

On the thirtieth of June, 1901, forty-three converts were baptized at Jaro, and a church was organized. Mr. Briggs says of the work that it “is growing daily, like the church after Pentecost.”

An Interesting Document.

When the missionaries had been in the islands less than a year, they were handed

a roll containing the names of 7,934 persons who had banded together to leave Rome. This they sent to the Missionary Rooms. Dr. Mabie says:

“ The roll is one of much interest. It is written in Spanish, and entitled, ‘ List of people of this company, subject to this town of Janiway, with names and appellations.’ The names are analyzed into classes, as follows: Head men, 35; aged and sick, 310; working men, 1,466; women liable to pay taxes, 1,937; young people, 4,304; total 7,934. While indeed, this does not indicate that this great number of people have become evangelical Christians, it does make clear that the people of the islands are tired of the empty formalism and corruptions of the mediæval Catholicism which Spain long impressed upon them, and that they will now be open to the approaches of such a simple and New Testament Christianity as our American missionaries are offering them. Who can doubt that God is leading in this work ?”

Mr. Lund Returns to Spain.

On account of failing health Mr. Lund was obliged, just at this most interesting juncture, to relinquish the work and return to Spain. It was with great regret that he took this step, but assured that it was the will of God he left this most promising work in his hands, and in the care of Mr. Briggs and the faithful Manikan.

Present Outlook.

Rev. Stephen S. Huse, Jr., and Rev. George E. Finlay joined Mr. Briggs in

Panay in the summer of 1901, and already are hard at work. Dr. T. S. Barbour, Foreign Secretary of the Missionary Union, made a visit to the islands in November of the same year.

More than one hundred have been baptized, and before Mr. Lund left he reported

over thirty candidates for the ordinance,—some men qualified to receive training for preaching,—and invitations to preach in many places, even to people who are ready to build their own chapels.



REV. S. S. HUSE, JR.

The printing press is already on the field. That the people will read Christian literature is proved by recent word from Mr. Briggs: "We already have 800 subscriptions for *El Heraldo* at fifty cents a year, and more than half paid in. At the rate our subscription list grows we shall

soon be helping support the mission with the press. Next month we increase our edition to 1,200 copies."

Our Responsibility.

According to an agreement among themselves, by the missionaries on the field,

Protestant mission work in the islands of Panay and Negros has been given into the hands of the Baptists and Presbyterians. Shall we accept our share of this trust and answer the call of God to assist in lifting



REV. G. E. FINLAY

up this people so long sunk in superstition and error?

Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we, to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation, oh, salvation,
The joyful sound proclaim,
'Till Earth's remotest nation
Has learnt Messiah's name.

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